

MRSA

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
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What is MRSA? *Staphylococcus aureus*, often called just "staph," is a bacteria, or germ, that is commonly found on the surface of the skin and in the nose of healthy people. This is called colonization. Occasionally, if there is a break or cut in the skin, staph can get into the body. This may cause an infection, which can be minor (such as pimples or boils) or serious (such as blood infections or pneumonia).

Methicillin is an antibiotic, made from penicillin, that is used to treat staph infections. However, some staph germs have developed resistance over time to methicillin and can no longer be killed by this antibiotic. These resistant germs are called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or **MRSA**.

What is the difference between colonization and infection? Colonization means that MRSA is present on or in the body without causing illness. Infection means that MRSA is making the person sick.

Where is MRSA found? MRSA can be found on the skin and in the nose.

Is MRSA treatable? Yes. There are antibiotics that can successfully kill the bacteria if taken as prescribed. Patients who are only colonized with MRSA usually do not need treatment.

What does MRSA look like? MRSA skin infections look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful and have pus or drainage.

How do I prevent MRSA? The following simple precautions will protect you and help to prevent spread of MRSA:

1. **Handwashing is the most effective way to protect yourself and others.**

Hands should be washed well with soap and water and dried

thoroughly: before eating or drinking, before dealing with grazes, scratches, cuts or wounds, after going to the bathroom, after blowing your nose.



2. Keep cuts, scrapes, and wounds clean and covered at all times.
3. Don't touch or squeeze spots or pimples with your fingers.
4. If possible, shower and wash hair regularly.
5. Never share personal items such as towels or linens.
6. Never share clothing.
7. Do not hand wash your own clothing. Tap water and hand soap will not kill staph germs. Have the clothes washed at the laundry facility where water is hot and sanitizing agents are used.
8. Do not share needles, syringes, cotton or other drug equipment.
9. Do not share tattoo guns/equipment or ink.

